



(U) 'Leadership and Intelligence' SIGINT Assessments - A Breakthrough Waiting to Happen

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(S) SIGINT assessment reports contribute to the war on terrorism.

(S//SI) People sometimes think of SIGINT Assessment Reports* as being a great source of background information, but not really useful as actionable intelligence. Think again! In fact, SIGINT assessments have helped US officials carry out investigations that convicted dangerous terrorists - including those behind the plot to kill the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. (See [related article](#).)

(S//SI) Assessment Reports Help Convict Plotters

(TS//SI) In August 2002, the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) Libyan Team (S2E323) published a "leadership and intelligence" SIGINT assessment that warned about the activities of Libyan intelligence officer Muhammad Isma'il (pictured above), a close associate of Mu'ammarr Qadhafi's son. The SIGINT assessment noted that Isma'il was promoting Qadhafi's exploitation of Islam in a manner that threatened U.S. interests. For example, he was involved with a Philippine terrorist group and had cooperated with the Taleban in moving Arab mujahidin out of Afghanistan.

(TS//SI) After reading the 2002 assessment, a senior Pentagon official was sufficiently concerned that he held two meetings with MENA's Libyan Team analysts in the fall of 2002 to talk about Isma'il's activities. NSA's forward-leaning senior Libyan analyst took the lead in the discussions, expanding on the assessment and addressing the official's questions on the intelligence.

(TS//SI) Isma'il's activities finally caught up with him in November 2003 when Saudi authorities arrested him.** When Saudi security personnel interviewed Isma'il, they learned he was part of a Libyan plot to destabilize the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by organizing and financing Saudi Islamic terrorists. This plot called for the assassination of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah.

(TS//SI//REL) Initially, the Intelligence Community (IC) questioned the identity of the man in custody, but the Libyan Team was certain he was the right man, and argued that the information obtained from the Saudi interview was entirely consistent with Isma'il's past activities. More importantly, the Libyan Team had very strong circumstantial evidence that supported the emerging details of the plot.

(TS//SI//REL) The Libyan Team took this circumstantial evidence and combined it with information about Isma'il's career to draft a second SIGINT assessment. This assessment, published in early 2004, provided the IC a one-document compendium of the available SIGINT information on Libyan activities and personalities related to the plot.***

(TS//SI//REL) MENA's Libyan Team analysts met with FBI analysts and agents in the early spring of 2004 to share information related to the case. The Libyan Team **provided key input to the FBI investigation**, which resulted in the conviction of Isma'il's co-conspirator Abdurahman Alamoudi, the President of the American Muslim Foundation, and contributed to the break-up of terrorist groups in Saudi Arabia.

(U) Conclusion

(S//SI) Those who authored the initial Libyan intelligence and leadership assessment in 2002 could not predict the impact of their analysis at a future point in time. But isn't that the point? Analysts across SID write SIGINT assessments every week, never knowing when or how the bits and pieces they connect will some day answer a question that will save lives.

(U) Footnotes:

* (U) What Is a SIGINT Assessment?

(S//SI) When an analyst produces a SIGINT Assessment Report, he compiles "everything we've got" on a certain topic, analyzes it, and presents conclusions based on the intelligence.

Customers greatly appreciate these reports not only for their scope, but because they contain the full insights of SIGINT analysts who, in many cases, have followed the topic for years. Often these reports take the form of profiles of politicians or other people of interest. (For further info, see the [SIGINT Assessment Reporting Standards](#).)

** (TS//SI//REL) News of his arrest was first revealed through SIGINT reporting by the Egyptian team (S2E321).

*** (S) Chris Ciccolo, NSA Executive Assistant to the Deputy DCI, was instrumental in working with MENA's Libyan Team to ensure the dissemination of this assessment and other SIGINT information on the plot to the highest levels of the IC.

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